

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND DECISION NOTICE
FOR THE SUPPLEMENTAL STOCKING OF YELLOW PERCH
IN WADSWORTH POND, GREAT FALLS

March 27, 2007

Project proposal:

FWP is proposing to conduct supplemental stocking of yellow perch in Wadsworth Pond to enhance the fishery. Although MFWP has never stocked yellow perch in Wadsworth Pond, yellow perch are present, most likely from the Sun River water supply that provides water for the pond. To accomplish the objectives of the proposed project MFWP would transfer perch from an existing wild population.

Site location and characteristics:

Wadsworth Pond is located in Cascade County on the west edge of the city of Great Falls. The pond lies within Wadsworth Park which is administered by the City of Great Falls. The legal description is T20N, R1E, S 17. The pond is 41 acres in surface area and has a maximum depth of 14 feet.

Project justification:

This project is being proposed to help realize the full potential of Wadsworth Pond as a quality urban fishery that provides angling opportunity for local residents and generates interest in the sport of angling by children through various education programs conducted at Wadsworth Pond.

Environmental impacts of project:

Yellow perch are presently in Wadsworth Pond. No adverse effects are expected for plants, adult amphibians, reptiles, birds, wild mammals or humans.

Social impacts:

There are no statewide angler pressure estimates available to indicate angler use of Wadsworth Pond, but information from the city of Great Falls indicates automobile counts during June, July and August can be as high as 1500. Empirical information from local anglers indicates the pond receives substantial use by anglers year round. Also, there are several educational programs sponsored by local sporting groups that are held at Wadsworth Pond to generate interest in angling. The social impacts from this project are expected to be long term and beneficial.

Public involvement:

In compliance with ARM 12.2.432 through 12.2.433 (inclusive) and the Montana Environmental Policy Act (Mitchell 2002), an environmental assessment was prepared and circulated for public comment from February 27, 2007 through March 28, 2007. The draft EA was sent to the following people, organizations, agencies and officials or was posted in the listed manner for public review;

- Available at the FWP region four office in Great Falls
- Posted on the FWP website
- Official FWP press release on February 28, 2007
- Article in Great Falls Tribune on March 1, 2007 titled “*FWP planning to stock Wadsworth Pond with perch*”
- Legal notice printed in The Great Falls Tribune on March 2, 2007
- Sent to 18 agencies, officials, Tribes, sporting groups and governing bodies listed on the cover letter of the Draft EA.

MFWP received four comments between March 1 and March 9; all by e-mail. There was no opposition to the proposed action. Two commenters supported the proposal unconditionally, one suggested rule changes at the park regarding no cleaning of fish on site, and one suggested stocking crappie and bluegill. The cleaning of fish on site is outside of the scope of this proposal and would require the city of Great Falls to make a change in rule. Stocking crappie and bluegill was not considered in this proposal because FWP believes enhancing the existing perch population would best meet the management objectives of the pond. Also, there is concern that if crappie or bluegill were stocked in Wadsworth Pond, it could become a source of illegal introductions of these species into other neighboring waters. For these reasons, stocking of crappie and bluegill was not considered at this time.

Public scoping did not identify any issues that were not covered in the draft EA.

Additional information:

During the scoping period, FWP collected yellow perch from a donor population for disease testing. Laboratory results were negative for viruses. This information was forwarded to the FWP Fish Health Committee, along with the wild fish transfer request, and the committee unanimously supported the proposed action.

Decision notice:

Based on the public comment from scoping, the agreement for the need to improve the fishery at Wadsworth Pond, I recommend that the proposed project be implemented to fulfill the desired outcome. The draft EA therefore becomes the final EA by reference in this Decision Notice and is effective upon this date.

Gary Bertellotti

3/27/2007

Gary Bertellotti
Region Four Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Date